

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 12931 090109Z
ACTION OES-09

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH PRESSING
GLOBAL PROBLEMS--POPULATION GROWTH AND ADEQUATE FOOD
PRODUCTION

REF: A) STATE 107370, B) STATE 197791, C) MEXICO 12930

1. EMBASSY DID NOT RESPOND EARLIER IN THE BELIEF THAT
OUR ROLE IN MEXICO IN DEALING WITH THE POPULATION AND
FOOD PROBLEMS IS SUFFICIENTLY UNIQUE AS TO NOT BE OF
MUCH RELEVANCE FOR OUR POSTURE IN OTHER LDC'S. HOWEVER,
MEXICO IS ONE OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE THE POPULATION
GROWTH PRESSURES ARE PARTICULARLY ACUTE AND THE SHORTFALL
IN FOOD PRODUCTION IS OF GROWING CONCERN, AND WE WELCOME
THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADD OUR COMMENTS TO THOSE OF OTHER
MISSIONS.

2. MEXICO HAS A LONG TRADITION OF SPURNING OFFICIAL U.S.
ASSISTANCE AND WE HAVE NO DIRECT AID PROGRAMS HERE. THE
PROSPECT OF LARGE OIL INCOME IN THE FUTURE, WHICH WILL
GIVE MEXICO THE MEANS TO FUND NEEDED PROJECTS OR HIRE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, MAKE IT EVEN MORE UNLIKELY THAT
WE WILL HAVE SUCH PROGRAMS HERE IN THE FORESEEABLE
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PAGE 02 MEXICO 12931 090109Z

FUTURE.

3. THE FAMILY PLANNING PORTION OF THE MEXICAN POPULATION/
FOOD EQUATION IS PROCEEDING WELL. THE GOM IS DEDICATED
TO REDUCING POPULATION GROWTH AND GIVEN THE
MEXICAN ENVIRONMENT IS PROBABLY MOVING ALONG ABOUT AS
WELL AS CAN BE EXPECTED, IF NOT AS RAPIDLY AS WE OR THE

MEXICANS MIGHT WISH. OUR INDIRECT AND DISCREET AID ASSISTANCE PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE PROGRAM BUT IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THE GOM WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO INCREASED U.S. INVOLVEMENT. NOR GIVEN THE SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE HERE WOULD IT BE DESIRABLE FOR US TO HAVE A MORE VISIBLE PARTICIPATION.

4. FOOD PRODUCTION IS THE PART OF THE EQUATION THAT NEEDS MORE ATTENTION. THE GOM RECOGNIZES THAT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION GENERALLY HAS STAGNATED SINCE ABOUT 1965 AND AGRICULTURE IS A PRIORITY ITEM IN THE MEXICAN BUDGET. THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY BE CONTEMPLATING SOME FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN LANDHOLDING AND INVESTMENT RULES FOR AGRICULTURE (REFTEL) IN ORDER TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, ALTHOUGH THESE MAY BE A WHILE IN COMING. WE KNOW THAT THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT ON DOWN IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN AGRICULTURE, BUT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC FACTORS WHICH INHIBIT AN OVERNIGHT TRANSFORMATION.

5. IN CONSIDERING WHAT ROLE THE MISSION CAN PLAY IN HELPING MEXICO TO ADDRESS THE POPULATION/FOOD PROBLEM, ONE MUST KEEP IN MIND MEXICO'S KEEN SENSITIVITY ABOUT FOREIGN, AND PARTICULARLY U.S., INVOLVEMENT IN MEXICO'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MEXICO 12931 090109Z

ACCEPTED--WITH SOME RESERVATIONS; BUT THERE IS DEEPLY SEATED RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE. IF WE WERE TO BE VERY ACTIVIST IN PRESSING THE MEXICANS TO ADDRESS THE FOOD PROBLEM AND/OR PREFERRING U.S. ASSISTANCE WE MIGHT MERELY EXCITE MEXICAN SUSPICIONS THAT WE WERE ACTING INDIRECTLY ON BEHALF OF POTENTIAL U.S. INVESTORS.

6. TO PRESS MEXICAN OFFICIALS ON THESE TWO PROBLEMS IS IN A REAL SENSE TO PREACH TO THE CONVERTED. I THINK THAT THE PARTICULAR SITUATION IN MEXICO SUGGESTS THAT DISCUSSIONS ON THESE TWO TOPICS SHOULD BE DISCREET, INFORMAL AND UNOFFICIAL, AND PROBABLY MAINLY AT THE WORKING LEVEL. IN THIS FASHION WE MAY BE ABLE TO HAVE USEFUL INFLUENCE WITHOUT RAISING ANY OF THE TRADITIONAL BOGIES ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS. WE SHOULD CERTAINLY ENCOURAGE THE IFI'S, AND POSSIBLY THE UNDP AND FAO, TO LEND MAXIMUM ASSISTANCE TO MEXICO'S OWN EFFORTS. FOR MY PART, I AM CONVINCED THAT THESE CLOSELY RELATED PROBLEMS ARE AT THE HEART OF OUR RELATIONS WITH MEXICO AND I WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY TO URGE THE GOM TO USE ALL AVAILABLE EXTERNAL SOURCES

OF ASSISTANCE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ATTACK THESE IMPORTANT
SUBJECTS. LUCEY

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